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# ARCHITECTURE **DC**

## Eminent Domains: Residential Design Award Winners for 2014



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The bm Modular One house,  
 by Robert M. Gurney, FAIA.

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Welcome to our summer issue, which showcases the results of our just-completed spring residential design competition, held each year in association with *Washingtonian* magazine. As always, the jurors for the competition were brought in from out of town and reviewed the submissions without knowing who did them. A big thanks to this year's jurors, listed at right, who spent a day going through more than 90 submissions to select the winners.

In explaining their selections at the concluding roundtable, this year's jurors, like jurors in previous years, expressed surprise that Washington's new residential architecture includes not just projects done in historical styles, but a lot of modernist designs, as well. As I listened to the jurors, I had to remind myself that it really hasn't been that long since their preconception was mostly true. In 1997, when my husband and I asked our architect to design a modern home for us (the renovation of a derelict row house), modernist residential design was still somewhat out of fashion in Washington. To be sure, there were modernist houses in the city back then, but they were few and far between. Within several years, however, that changed dramatically, with modernism becoming much more popular.



# Welcome!

The one architect who, more than any other, planted the seeds of modernist residential design in the Washington area is Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA. A recent project he did together with his son Simon Jacobsen appears in these pages (see page 38). In addition to designing numerous modern houses in Washington and elsewhere, Jacobsen over the years has played a huge role in training and inspiring later generations of modernist architects. For example, both Robert Gurney, FAIA, and David Jameson, FAIA, whose winning projects appear in this issue (see page 24), worked for Hugh before setting up their own practices. And it's easy to draw a line from Hugh Jacobsen's work to that of Mark McInturff, FAIA, whose winning project also appears in these pages (see page 12). Indeed, it's not much of a stretch to view this issue of the magazine, with its many award-winning modernist designs, as a testament to Hugh Jacobsen's legacy.

Modern isn't everyone's cup of tea, of course, and that's perfectly fine. New residential design in the Washington area continues to include expertly done homes in traditional styles, as well. Whatever your preferred style, there are AIA | DC member firms who can do it well, whether it's a design for a new house or condominium, or a design for a part of a residence. In connection with the latter, this issue also includes an article on some well-done new kitchen projects (see page 50).

Lastly, we've included an article with some tips about how to hire an architect, if you are just beginning your project (see page 61). To supplement the article, another great resource is the Chapter's website—[aiadc.com](http://aiadc.com)—which has a section devoted to meeting the needs of new architectural clients. And those of us at the Chapter are happy to help you personally. We've assisted many people over the years, so please don't hesitate to contact us.

We hope you will enjoy this issue, and as always, we love to get your feedback.

Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA  
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## Contributors

**Denise Liebowitz** ("Better Than New"), formerly with the National Capital Planning Commission, is a regular contributor to **ARCHITECTUREDC**.

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**George Myers, AIA** ("Remodeling Your Home") is president of **GTM Architects**.

**Ronald O'Rourke** ("Rooms of One's Own") is a regular contributor to **ARCHITECTUREDC**. His father, Jack O'Rourke, was an architect in San Francisco for more than four decades.

## Washingtonian Awards Jurors

**Toshiko Mori, FAIA**  
Toshiko Mori Architect  
New York, NY

**Michele Thackrah**  
Archer & Buchanan Architecture  
West Chester, PA

**Rolando Rivas-Camp, FAIA**  
U.S. General Services Administration  
Washington, DC

## Correction

Due to an error in the information provided to **ARCHITECTUREDC**, the project credits for the Eagle Academy and the E.L. Haynes school that appeared in the previous issue listed the lighting designers incorrectly. Credit should have gone to **Gilmore Lighting Design** for both projects.





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Photo © Julia Heine/McInturff Architects

# Better Than New:

## Transformative Renovations by Denise Liebowitz

Some homes need a spruce-up, others call for an overhaul, and some may require a rebuild. The scope of the three home renovations that got the nod from the Washingtonian Award jurors this year run the gamut, but they all reimagine living spaces that respect their antecedents and infuse them with air, light, and a contemporary aesthetic.

### Mullet House and Garden

“Wonderful economy of budget and materials to create a little jewel box,” was the jury’s verdict on the renovation and expansion of this 1920s bungalow in Takoma Park, Maryland. The client, landscape designer Carolyn Mullet, had lived in the home for many years but always longed for more light. “Bungalows are almost always dark, and being surrounded by an urban forest made it even darker,” she said. In addition, Mullet wanted a more modernist, pared-down aesthetic and a design that better connected the house to the garden.

To achieve her goals, Mullet asked **Mark McInturff, FAIA**, of **McInturff Architects**, for two new rooms—a master suite and a garden room overlooking the rear yard. “The lot is very deep, but includes a steep ravine,” explained McInturff, “and the house did not address the lot at all.” To meet his client’s requirement for more light, the architect created a double-height space, sweeping up the new roofline to mirror the downward angle of the roof of the original bungalow. “On a heavily wooded site, high ceilings and tall windows bring in light and capture the drama of the surrounding trees,” said McInturff. “But on a west-facing exposure like this, you’ll bake your client unless you deal with the heat and glare.” White exterior louvers provide protection to the interior and at the

same time create a constantly changing play of gentle light and shadow. For McInturff, the louvers are a scaled-up version of the traditional shutters found on houses throughout Takoma Park, so they are neighborhood-appropriate.

The interior is spare, clean, and simple, just as Mullet wanted. New light-colored oak flooring was installed throughout the main floor, both in the original house and the new rooms. Mullet wanted to have a feature in the addition that made the connection with the extensive traditional wood trim of the original bungalow. The garden room’s fireplace and slate surround are backed by a three-dimensional, accordion walnut panel that delivers plenty of high-design impact on a modest budget.

Because the house is located in Takoma Park’s Historic District, the new construction had to be vetted by city and county review bodies. “Most renovations in the neighborhood copy the original style,” Mullet noted. “This was something unusually modern, and Mark was wonderful leading us through the process.” To ensure that the addition with its black corrugated metal cladding is not visible from the street as required by the Historic District design guidelines, the architect “pinched in” the modern rear extension two feet on each side to make it narrower than the original structure. Mullet reported that the review group



Rear of the Mullet House before renovation.

Photo © Jeffrey McInturff/  
McInturff Architects



was very pleased with this solution as well as the project's modern aesthetic and that the design "sailed through the process."

Somewhat unusually in an architecture design competition, McInturff titled his submission, not "Mullet House," but rather "Mullet House and Garden." He did so, he explained, because of the truly collaborative nature of the project and the fundamental interrelationship between the house and the landscape surrounding it. The two new rooms are elevated and look out and over the garden terraces that step down to the edge of the wooded ravine. "I used to have a traditional Washington garden here—azaleas, hydrangeas, etc.," Mullet recalled, "but then the deer arrived in the neighborhood and decimated everything. I pulled nearly everything out and now it's a native, deer-resistant garden that is so much easier to maintain." Satisfied with the way the house now responds to its setting, McInturff said, "There is nothing precious in either the landscape, garden, or architecture." For Mullet, "I love the scale, the air, the light; I wake up every morning in this beautiful house and feel grateful."



Main living area of the Mullet House.

Photo © Julia Heine/McInturff Architects



The Hazel River Cabin, with the restored toll keeper's log cabin at right, the historic clapboard addition at the center, and the relocated log cabin at left (the roof of the narrow, modern connector is barely visible between the left and center structures).



Photo © Anice Hoachlander/Hoachlander Davis Photography

## Hazel River Cabin

This unusual project in Rappahannock County, Virginia, has been garnering rave reviews, scooping up architecture awards, and, for our jurors, ticking all the right boxes: historic preservation, sustainable design, and a contemporary aesthetic that incorporates efficient systems and modern technology.

When the owner purchased a piece of mountain land for a weekend retreat and started demolishing what he thought was a derelict teardown, he discovered a historic gem beneath the vines. It was a 1794 toll keeper's log cabin along the Old Sperryville Pike that had been expanded in the 1840s with a small clapboard addition. Although he knew the structures should be saved, the property owner needed more space if this was to be his home. His next step was to purchase a dilapidated chestnut log cabin in Maryland, have it dismantled, and moved to his site. It was at this point that **David Haresign, FAIA, of Bonstra | Haresign Architects LLP**, entered the picture. The architect carefully assembled the three cabins to create a 2,400-square-foot home that respects the history of the venerable structures and the beauty of their materials while meeting his client's 21st-century requirements: a large, modern kitchen, dining

and living areas, a library, and two bedrooms each with its own bath.

The three different structures are cohesively connected without losing their individual character, and all new elements are transparently contemporary; there is no attempt to pretend they are old. A granite-and-glass landing connects the chestnut cabin to the clapboard addition. The cedar shake roofing on the log cabins contrasts with the copper roofs of the 1840s frame addition and the brand new connecting link. Large new windows and dormers open views to the river and Old Rag Mountain. Modern stairs, bathrooms, kitchen, inserted sleeping loft, and built-ins take their place comfortably adjacent to original flooring, hand-hewn beams, and a stone chimney.

Over 70 percent of the wood of the project was reclaimed, some of it from nearby Madison County's courthouse, and much of the new building materials and fabrication—nails, lumber, forged hardware, and cabinets—was locally sourced. "This project brought back two old buildings but did not take anything away from the originals," said one juror with enthusiasm.

*The Hazel River Cabin has received several awards from AIA | DC and was previously featured in the Winter 2011 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC.*

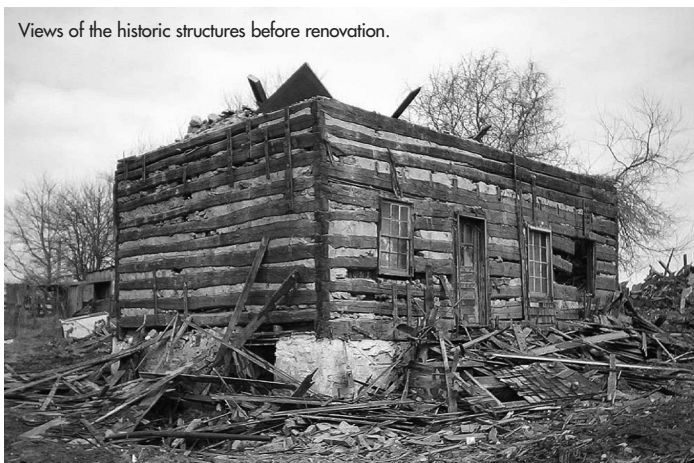




Interior of the renovated Hazel River Cabin.

Photo © Anice Hoachlander/Hoachlander Davis Photography

Views of the historic structures before renovation.



Photos courtesy of the architects



Front façade of the renovated and expanded  
Georgetown Residence by Rixey-Rixey Architects  
(the rear façade is shown on the cover).

Photo © Paul Burk Photography







Master bathroom of the Georgetown Residence.

Photo © Paul Burk Photography

## Georgetown Residence

"The only way this renovation could have happened was that the house was built after 1960," said architect **Douglas Rixey, AIA**, speaking about the update of a Georgetown townhouse built in the Federal Revival style. "If it had been pre-1960, there is no way the Old Georgetown Board [design review committee] would have approved the addition of [another] story." The additional height was well within existing zoning limits, and the new floor, sheathed in copper and featuring a large dormer window, creates a street facade that stands comfortably next to its neighbors.

Rixey's client, William Langhorne, a professional race car driver, had purchased the house from his parents in 2009. "I had met Douglas through my father and knew that he could work with all the Georgetown building constraints," recalled homeowner Langhorne. Initially he hired the architect to renovate the garage to make room for his collection of motorcycles. Rixey installed a lift and created a parking mezzanine that can accommodate four motorcycles above and three cars below. Langhorne married about that time and the attention of both the homeowners and the architect soon turned to the house. "They are a young, international couple who appreciated a modernist aesthetic, and they wanted a large open floor plan," recalled Rixey.

The architect responded with a dramatic floating stair and glass elevator that together serve as the essential organizing

element of the design and provide the transparent connection between all floors. "The stair was the big challenge in this project," said Rixey. After investigating various possible alignments in the 19-foot-wide house, he settled on the traditional side placement of the stairway, but "it was very tricky to fit in the stairs and elevator and leave enough room for circulation and the open spaces we wanted. The design of the stair turnings and transitions required many iterations and we had literally only inches to spare." Bathed in natural light from windows and skylights, the white oak stair rises effortlessly from the street entrance to the top of the house, its angular steps contrasting with graceful, curving handrails and all precisely detailed in glass and steel.

The street-level entry has a wide pivot door featuring electric glass that changes from transparent to opaque in a microsecond. This level contains a study, den, two baths, and a media room for projection TV and a race car simulator. One floor up are the wide-open, loft-like living, dining, and family areas along with a sleek kitchen by Bulthaup, a luxury manufacturer with roots in the German Bauhaus. The entire rear wall on this level has been fitted with full-height folding glass doors that open dramatically to the garden, paved patio, and lap pool.

A master guest suite along with two bedrooms and a hall bath occupy the next floor. The new top floor is devoted to an expansive master bedroom, customized closets to satisfy the most demanding fashionista, and a knock-your-socks-off master bath.



Special attention has been lavished on all the home's bathrooms, which are by Boffi, the high-end Italian manufacturer. The first-floor marble-lined powder room showcases an antique basin that traces its provenance back to Istanbul. "We all really wanted to use the marble basin and fitted it with a drain and plumbing. But it weighed several hundred pounds, so the question then became how to support it," recalled Rixey. "The homeowners had some beautiful old cypress railroad ties and it was their suggestion to recycle those to use as a sturdy pedestal." The result is a remarkable juxtaposition of cool, classic marble with the rough-hewn organic cypress and all topped with a contemporary steel chandelier. The hall bath on the second floor with rectangular toilet and double sinks is a sleek study in taupe, stone, and spare design.

But it's the master bath that sets the bar in sybaritic bathing experiences. Those mounting the stairs or ascending in the elevator are rewarded with a full-on view of the bath with its freestanding, shell-like tub, pebble-lined dual shower, and eight-foot-long walnut vanity. Homeowner Langhorne explained, "My wife and I were inspired by the outdoor showers and baths we encountered on our honeymoon in Bali and we wanted to recreate that feeling here." Drenched in natural light from generous skylights and only slightly screened by an artful arrangement of bamboo, the bath is enclosed by glass. For those not on a honeymoon or with privacy issues, the glass, like that of the front door, is "smart" and can go from clear to opaque with the flick of a switch.

The jury appreciated "the carefully designed new level, the highly detailed contemporary interior, and the masterful treatment of the stairway." 🏡

Staircase of the Georgetown Residence,  
with glass elevator visible in the background.

Photo © Paul Burk Photography





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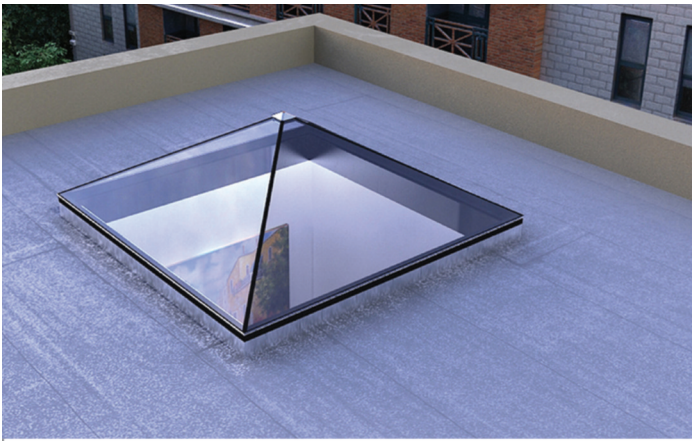


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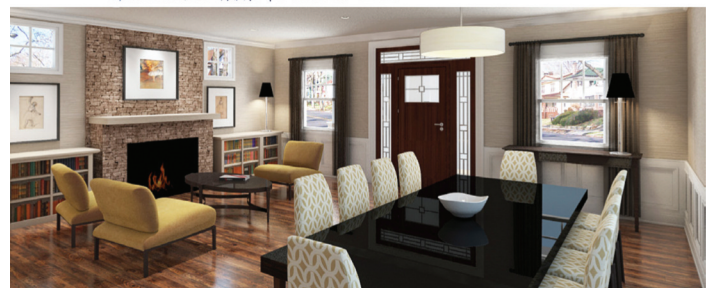
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Look Easy by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

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## 4 Springs Lane

The first question that **Robert M. Gurney, FAIA**, had to resolve when designing this weekend house in pastoral Rappahannock County, Virginia, was where exactly to put it. Given a 24-acre property comprising a tapestry of rolling hills, woodlands, and open fields, there was no obvious answer. Following extensive study, which entailed the erection of scaffolding in several locations to assess potential views, Gurney and his Washington-based client settled on a spot high on a hill overlooking a meadow at the base of the woods, with the Blue Ridge Mountains visible in the distance.

The spectacular vistas afforded by that location provided the basis for the house's spatial composition. In plan, the house is organized around a series of three parallel, linear pavilions aligned to take utmost advantage of the primary view corridors. The three-story entrance pavilion, which includes a screened porch on the middle level and a bedroom suite above, features a full-height staircase lined with glass on the major view side. At the

center of the house is a lower, rectangular tube containing the main living/dining area, which has floor-to-ceiling glass at each end, allowing anyone standing on the swimming pool deck at the rear of the house to see all the way through the space. The third major pavilion is the tallest, at four stories, and includes another bedroom suite, a home office, plus a roof deck surrounded by simple glass railings that practically disappear in most light conditions.

The three main pavilions are connected by lower-rise "hyphens," which contain the kitchen and other service and circulation spaces. The entire assemblage is united by a limited palette of finish materials, including wood, stone, fiber-cement panels, and of course, abundant glass. Despite—or perhaps, because of—its crisp geometry and spare elegance, the house is ultimately quite deferential to its natural setting, reflecting Gurney's conception of the project as "a framework to view the landscape."



Rear view of the house at 4 Springs Lane, with the pool deck in the foreground and the main living/dining space at center. The lowest level of the house is not visible from this side.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie





Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie

(Top) Home office, with wide views of the surrounding landscape.  
 (Bottom) Front view of the house, with the entry pavilion at left.  
 The home office is the glass-lined space at upper right.



Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie





## Komai Residence

For years, an empty, acutely triangular lot in Alexandria's popular Del Ray neighborhood attracted interest from developers and others eager to build on it. Their plans were consistently thwarted, however, by the site's unusual geometry, coupled with challenging zoning regulations that set strict height limits while mandating substantial setbacks from adjacent streets. These constraints left little room for a typical, traditionally styled house in keeping with the historic bungalows and neo-colonials commonly found in the area.

It took a pair of graphic designers who already lived nearby to realize the site's potential. Empty-nesters looking to downsize, they wanted a relatively small, modern house in the same neighborhood, and became convinced that a skilled architect could coax just enough living and working space out of that little triangle of land to suit their needs. They bought the lot and hired **Robert M. Gurney, FAIA**, to help them realize their dream.

The setbacks required by the zoning code dictated the basic outline of the house. It is a perfect right triangle except for a projecting, complementary triangular bay at the rear, which accommodates part of the dining room, and a small rectangular projection on the front, which encloses a fireplace. A lively, asymmetrical arrangement of large windows animates the street-facing façades. The corners of the stucco house are visually softened by slatted mahogany screens, one of which defines the main entry porch.

While the house's external massing is somewhat blocky—an inevitable result of those zoning restrictions again—the interior is surprisingly nuanced and intricate. The core of the house is the two-story living/dining area, which is trapezoidal in plan, thanks to the projecting bay at the rear (without which it would have been an irregular quadrilateral). Soaring above the space—and providing a subtle sense of separation between the living and dining areas—is a steel bridge that links the designers' home office on one side to the guest bedroom on the other. On the ground floor, the kitchen and the master bedroom suite are nestled into opposite corners of the triangular plan.

The design strikes a careful balance between privacy and openness. A pedestrian walking by the front of the house, for instance, may catch a glimpse of the main living area through a tall window at one corner of the space, but an opaque fireplace surround blocks a full view of the principal seating area. Skylights and higher-level windows above the fireplace ensure that the space still gets plenty of natural light. Meanwhile, the dining room bay is clad in a mix of clear glass and Kalwall—a milky white, translucent panel product made of fiberglass—which admits filtered light into the space.

While the Komai Residence was a relatively small project for Gurney, the architect took the job because he was intrigued by the challenges it posed. "I also really enjoyed having two creative designers for clients," he noted.



Dusk view of the house from the street. The designers' professional office is visible through the large window toward the right.



Photos © Maxwell MacKenzie

Living/dining space, with bridge above. The Kalwall panels in the bay window of the dining area are visible at lower left.



Main living area and fireplace.







The bm Modular One house.

Photos © Maxwell MacKenzie



Main living area of the bm Modular One house.

## bm Modular One

At first glance, the third project by **Robert M. Gurney, FAIA**, to win an award in this year's competition appears to be a classic example of his work, composed of simple geometric forms and distinguished by elegant, exquisitely executed details. Few people would suspect that the basic structure of the house was prefabricated in a factory in southern Virginia and shipped to the site in Bethesda on flatbed trucks. The name of the project—bm Modular One—incorporates the clients' initials and refers to the fact that it was the first modular building Gurney ever designed.

Gurney's clients had bought the lot from a builder/developer who had experience in modular construction, but the builder's portfolio of Craftsman-style and neo-Colonial models did not appeal to the buyers, who wanted a modern, light-filled house. The builder recommended Gurney, with whom he was already working on an unrelated project. The architect accepted the commission with the twin goals of fulfilling the clients' desires for a fast-track, affordable house and providing the builder with a new, modern prototype that he could add to his menu of modular products.

The house is composed of 13 modules, each prefabricated with integral windows, plumbing, electrical



Side view of the bm Modular One house.







Kitchen and dining area.

Photos © Maxwell MacKenzie



View of kitchen from living area.

wiring, and ventilation ducts. During the two weeks that the modules were being made at the Virginia factory, the on-site contractor in Bethesda was busy constructing foundations and a basement to match the modules' specifications. Upon delivery to the site, the modules were assembled in just two days. Afterwards, the on-site contracting team installed drywall and other interior and exterior finishes much as they would in a more conventional construction project.

As one would expect, the standard modules designed by Gurney can be assembled in numerous ways to create customized configurations. The modules are delivered primed but without any finishes or appliances. While the bm Modular One house boasts elegant materials that are common in Gurney's work, future versions of the prototype can easily be finished and furnished quite differently, according to the clients' tastes.

When asked whether prefabrication saved time and money in this case, Gurney admitted that any savings were minimal, simply because it was his first venture into such a system. He expressed confidence, however, that any future projects based on the same modular process would yield substantial budgetary and scheduling advantages.





Main living area of the NaCl House.

Photo © Paul Warchol Photography

## NaCl House

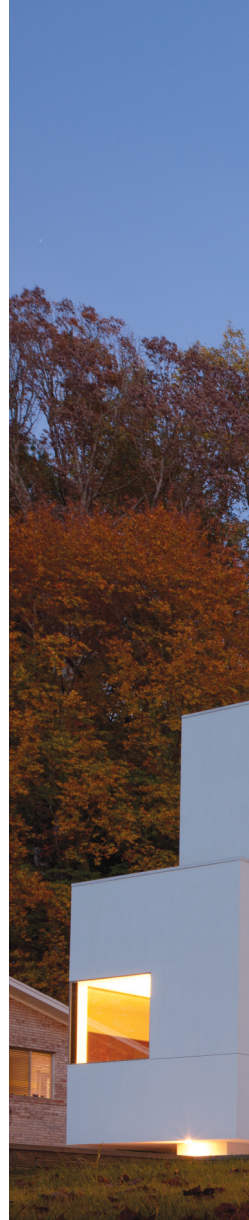
It is unusual for an entry to an architectural awards competition to begin with a close-up photograph of an unidentified mineral substance, but such was the case with the submission for the NaCl House. Named, of course, after the chemical symbol for ordinary table salt, the house was designed for a client whose business involves selling commodities such as rock salt. A sample of salt crystals that the client showed to architect **David Jameson, FAIA**, inspired both the house's nickname and its striking crystalline form—and explains the otherwise enigmatic photo that introduced the awards submission.

Even before adopting that hunk of salt as a muse, however, Jameson was eager to experiment with scale—or a lack of it—in the architecture of this house. The design deliberately obscures the structure's size, its proportions, and the relationships among its constituent volumes. Unadorned, white stucco blocks interconnect to form a composition of sublime abstraction. Expansion joints—expressed as an irregular grid of fine lines inscribed in the stucco—add a subtle overlay that further

confuses the reading of the composition. Most unusually, windows are placed flush with the house's exterior surfaces, thus eliminating shadows that would normally provide some clues about scale.

Calculated manipulations of space and form continue in the house's interior. After entering through a relatively modest, seven-foot-tall front door, visitors emerge into a soaring volume nearly 30 feet high. Living spaces are woven together in a way that blurs expected divisions, while an irregular network of windows admits daylight from sometimes surprising nooks and corners, creating what Jameson describes as "pockets of light." The result is a complex spatial experience that is difficult to convey in even the best photographs.

Although the NaCl House is quintessentially modern in its reliance on abstract, cubist forms and its lack of adornment, the project does reflect a degree of historic inspiration. "My favorite building in the world is the Pantheon in Rome," said Jameson. "I wanted to evoke that experience of compression and release [as one enters the Pantheon]. The house fools people into thinking they understand it, but it's full of surprises." 🏠







Exterior views of the NaCl House.

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# Rooms of One's Own:

## Exemplary Condominium and Multi-family Projects

by Ronald O'Rourke

The jurors this year selected two renovated condo units and a new rental apartment building for recognition. The renovated condos use minimal color to achieve elegant interiors, while the new apartment building employs deft design moves to create a smart-looking structure offering mostly below-market-rate rental units.

Entry area of the O/K Calvert apartment.

Photo © Hoachlander Davis Photography

### O/K Calvert Street

The O/K Calvert Street project, an 1,850-square-foot, one-bedroom condominium in Washington's Woodley Park neighborhood, converted a dark, north-facing unit in a 1970s-era building into a light-suffused residence with an almost Zen-like serenity. Named for the clients and the street on which it is located, the residence was designed by **Jacobsen Architecture**, a venerable Washington firm led by **Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA**, and his son, **Simon Jacobsen, Assoc. AIA**.

As originally built, the unit "presented a space that felt dark and divided," Simon Jacobsen said. "The owners sought to bring the soft light and airy serenity of an island getaway to their in-town residence."

To do that, the two Jacobsens and project architect **Heidi Leinbach** left the unit's basic floor plan largely unchanged and instead focused on surface treatments and the kind of small details that, when well handled, can create a big impact.

"The first order of business," Jacobsen said, "was to create a white-on-white color palette to generate the illusion that the north-facing apartment is lighter and brighter than possible given the laws of physics. What came after is every trick in our playbook."

"The new design," he said, "organizes a sequence of space and light, using reflective, light finishes to bring ambient light deep into the interior." The design employs etched glass partitions and doors to shape spaces, frame interior views, and establish an orderly geometry for the unit while allowing light to flow through the space. One of those partitions defines the entry area, while two others mediate the connection between the dining and living rooms. "The effect," according to Jacobsen, "is a peaceful abode in the heart of the city."

In addition to creating a spa-like atmosphere, the white-on-white color scheme serves as a backdrop for the owners' possessions. "The space was designed to be a living canvas where the owner's art and books are the art form and the light and shadows are the always-changing wow factor," Jacobsen said. The design employs the firm's signature "egg-crate" shelving system to create substantial storage and display space while maintaining a sense of geometric order and rhythm.

The most significant change in the unit's layout was made in the bedroom, where the existing plan featured a conventional arrangement of a bed backed up against one wall, facing another wall with two deep and dark closets. The new design floats the bed in the middle of the room, turning it ninety degrees to face the window, and surrounds it with a series of smaller and more accessible clothing storage cabinets. The bed's headboard was extended upward to create a partition with storage shelves on the other side. The partition defines a new dressing area, permitting the old dressing area, located in an adjacent space, to be converted into a home office.

As suggested by the piano in the living room, this isn't just a space for quiet relaxation. "Our clients were thrilled to host their first dinner party, stating that the apartment twinkles at night with candlelight," Jacobsen said. "Although modern, at night the spaces take on a 1930s, *Vanity Fair* party feel. This place is one thing during the day and something very different at night."

An attention to detail kept costs under control. "The theme," Jacobsen noted, "was do it once and do it right." The project's durable, high-quality finishes, he added, will help reduce maintenance costs in coming years.





View from the living room into the dining room.



Kitchen.

Photos © Hoachlander Davis Photography



Home office.



Bedroom, with new divider creating a distinct dressing area at right.





Main façade of 3 Trees Flats.

## 3 Trees Flats

The 3 Trees Flats apartment building, designed by **Schlesinger Associates Architects**, is located at 3910 Georgia Avenue, NW, on a city-owned site two blocks north of the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro station. The six-story building includes 130 units, of which 119 are classified as affordable, meaning that they are available to residents with an income at or below 60 percent of the area's median income.

To reduce the building's apparent size and give it proportions in keeping with those of area row houses, the façade is divided into a series of bay windows that give residents a view down Georgia Avenue, toward downtown, through generously sized, floor-to-ceiling windows. The bays incorporate notched fin walls that help to modulate the scale of the façade while blocking views of through-wall air conditioning grills, solving a problem that can mar the appearance of other apartment buildings. The contrast between the light-colored bays and the darker window frames adds to the façade's sense of rhythm. The final major compositional element in the façade is a green screen running down the centerline that will eventually be covered by a climbing vine.

The architects worked with the Petworth community to develop the program for the site. Facilities include a 28,000-square-foot community health center on the ground floor and community meeting and exercise rooms at the top level. The building includes a green roof that offers views of the city.

The green roof, along with the green screen, the use of significant daylighting, and an energy-efficient building envelope, helped the

Partial view of the rear façade of 3 Trees Flats.

Photo by Christy Schlesinger





Photo © Paul Warchol Photography



Green screen, or trellis, on the main façade.

Photo by Christy Schlesinger



View of one of the fins that help to obscure ventilation units.

Photo by Christy Schlesinger

project earn a Gold certification under the LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED ND) program, which is intended, according to the U.S. Green Building Council that administers the LEED program, “to inspire and help create better, more sustainable, well-connected neighborhoods. It looks beyond the scale of buildings to consider entire communities.”

The project received an AIA | DC Chapter Award and was previously featured in the Winter 2013 issue of **ARCHITECTUREDC**.

## Lassus Residence

The Lassus Residence, also designed by **Schlesinger Associates Architects**, completely rebuilt the interior of a 2,000-square-foot, two-level condominium in a building on 31st Street, NW, on the south side of the C&O canal in Georgetown.

The existing unit suffered from a dark and uninspired arrangement of closed-off rooms with hum-drum finishes. The renovation removed interior walls to open up the space and bring in natural light, and installed a striking, high-contrast combination of polished white and dark marble that gives the new residence a formal, almost tuxedo-like elegance. The design’s look is softened and warmed up a bit by veins in the stone and the selective use of other materials, particularly a long, amber- and honey-toned wooden counter between the kitchen and living room on the lower level, and two more such counters on the upper level, where the residence’s very spacious master suite and a study are located.





View showing both levels of the Lassus Residence.

Photo © Paul Warchol Photography

The center point of the new design is the monumental stair linking the two levels, which incorporates a series of massive stone elements. The new stair, the firm said, “is more sculpture than circulation, especially when viewed from the living room.” The rest of the design “is an exercise in minimalism, stripped down to its essential components.” The stone work isn’t just for show—the dark marble columns hide necessary pipes, stacks and ducts.

“The kitchen, previously an enclosed space, is now defined by a drop in ceiling height, with a swath of light

that gives the illusion of height and visually connects it to the dining room,” the firm said. “The second floor unfolds around a central glass spine that separates public space from the more private functions of bath and bedroom without requiring doorways.”

The design pays attention to small details to help it achieve its effects. For example, “a slight black reveal at the base of the walls and the use of frameless touch-latch doors throughout focuses on the clean lines of the walls,” according





The dramatically sculptural staircase.

Photo © Paul Warchol Photography





Home office, with the top of the staircase in the background.

Photo © Paul Warchol Photography



Kitchen.

Photo by Bruno Lassus



Master bathroom, with freestanding







Photo by Bruno Lassus

to the firm. "New windows and a skylight are also frameless, reducing the barrier between exterior and interior."

The bright space makes artificial lighting unnecessary during daylight hours. Light fixtures are generally hidden, producing a glow at night that illuminates and separates the planes in the design.

The white-and-dark scheme of the Lassus Residence and the white-on-white design of the O/K Calvert Street project make for an interesting comparison of approaches to minimalist design. In combination with 3 Trees Flats, meanwhile, the Lassus Residence helps illustrate the range of Schlesinger Associates' residential work.

The project also received a Chapter Award for Interior Architecture and was featured in the Winter 2011 issue of **ARCHITECTUREDC**. 

Living area, with kitchen at left.

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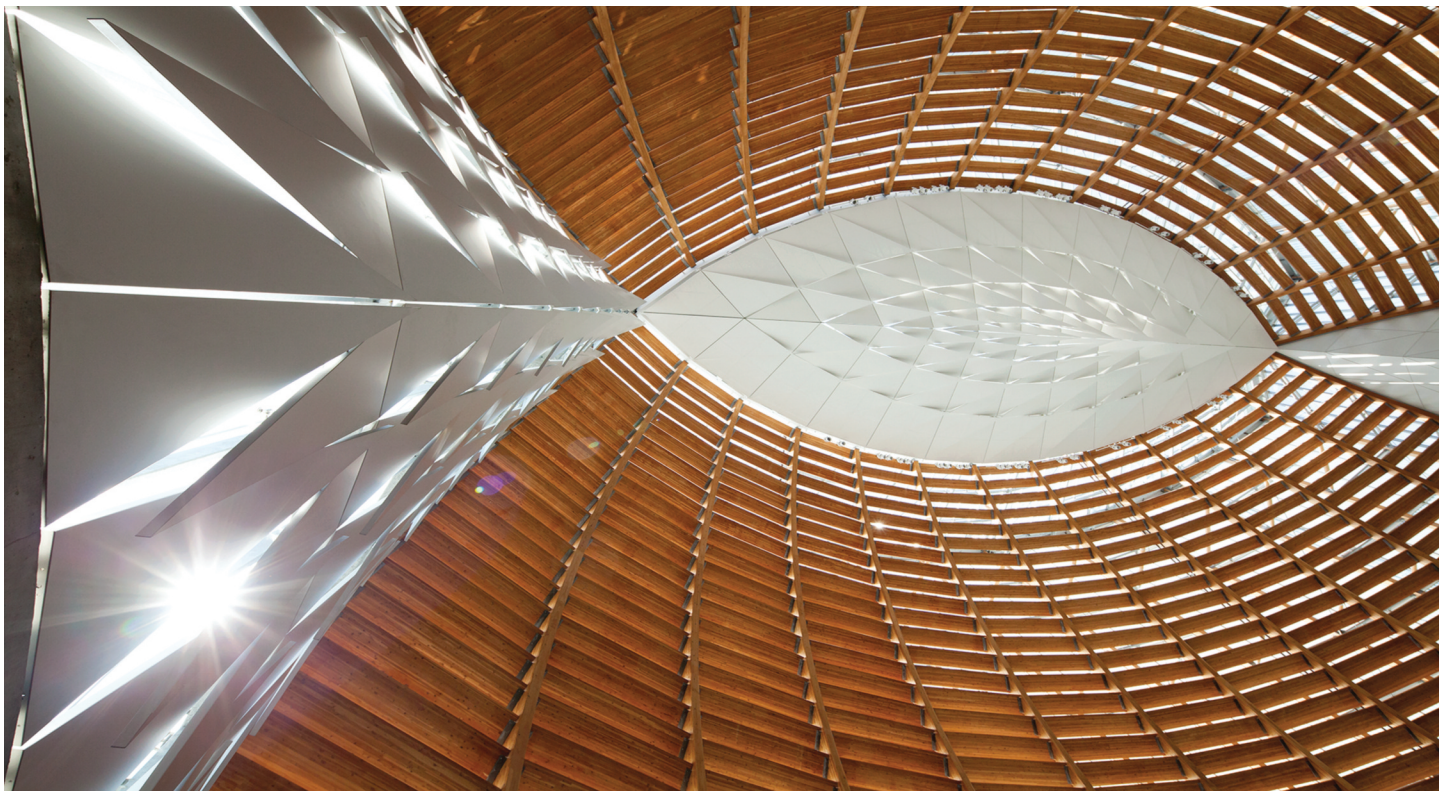
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# Kitchen Updates:

## Resuscitating the Heart of Your Home

by Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA

Updating one's kitchen is a common home-improvement project. But what, nowadays, makes for a good update? To find an answer, we took a look at our residential design competition entries to see what kinds of design elements architects have incorporated into recent kitchen projects for their clients.







Opposite page and above: Renovated kitchen by KUBE Architecture.

Photos © Greg Powers



Kitchen before renovation.  
Photo courtesy of KUBE Architecture

## Color—and we don't mean harvest gold or avocado

KUBE Architecture's ([kube-arch.com](http://kube-arch.com)) update of a 1960s-era house designed by the prominent mid-century architect Charles Goodman preserves the original kitchen plan but makes it pop with clean lines and color. A deep-grey concrete counter top is combined with bright aqua cabinets, while a lime green built-in pantry and a red custom acrylic dining table accent other parts of the room. Steel tubing, meanwhile, hides electrical and refrigerant lines.





Above and opposite: Kitchen renovation for a house on Gibson Island, by Barnes Vanze Architects.

Photos © Anice Hoachlander/Hoachlander Davis Photography

**Barnes Vanze Architects** ([barnesvanze.com](http://barnesvanze.com)) used color to add interest to a more traditionally designed kitchen for a lake house on Gibson Island, a few miles north of Annapolis. The architects placed the kitchen at the center of the house, making it the focal point for everything from big barbeques to intimate suppers.

Moss green paint, open shelving, and a 1920s-style checkerboard floor add charm without overdoing it. The careful design allows the kitchen to accommodate a full set of modern high-end appliances, including a 48-inch Wolf range, but insures that these large elements do not overwhelm the space.











# Built-ins can make the most of a limited space

KUBE got the most out of the small footprint of the kitchen in the Charles Goodman house by building appliances into the wall. Likewise, **Craig A. Morgan, AIA, LEED AP** ([CAMarchitect@gmail.com](mailto:CAMarchitect@gmail.com)) added built-in touches to the kitchen of a Capitol Hill row house. In this project, a wooden cabinet resembles a freestanding piece of furniture on the side facing the living room, while the kitchen-facing side incorporates an appliance garage that permits a coffee maker to be discreetly fitted into a corner, freeing up counter space.



Renovated kitchen in a Capitol Hill row house, by Craig A. Morgan, AIA, LEED AP.

Photo © Bruce E. Morgan



Pantry (above) and built-in storage (below) in a renovation by Barnes Vanze Architects.

Photos © Anice Hoachlander/  
Hoachlander Davis Photography

Barnes Vanze updated another kitchen in a 1930s-era home by building drawers into the back of a banquette. The drawers allow easy access to full depth of the storage space. In the same kitchen, using a divided sliding door rather than a conventional hinged door allows the pantry to be accessed without having an open door impinge on the kitchen space.

Lastly, to bring more natural light into their kitchens, architects have omitted window treatments. In cases where the view isn't great or maintaining privacy at eye level is a goal, clerestory windows higher on the wall can create a similar effect.

Smart use of color, built-ins, and steps to increase natural light can help make for a good update to any style of kitchen, be it traditional or modern, increasing both the enjoyment of the space and the house's value. 🏡





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Bottom left, "before" photo and, center, concept sketch by Amy Gardner.

Top and bottom right "after" photo by Celia Pearson.

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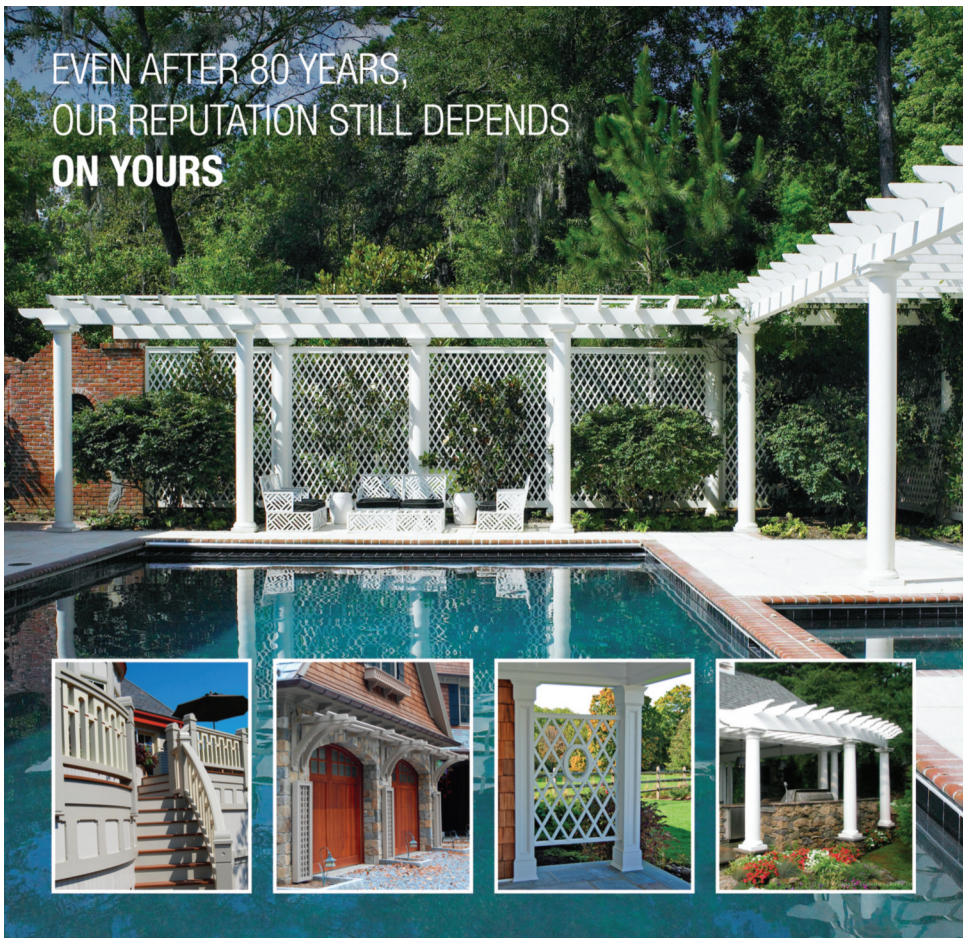
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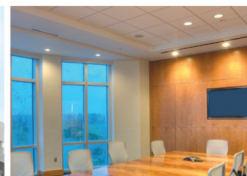
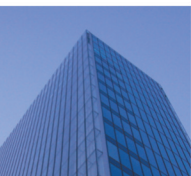
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# Remodeling Your Home:

## Tips for Success by George Myers, AIA

Like most homeowners, you probably have been thinking about making changes or improvements to your house or apartment from the moment you bought it. You have successfully tackled minor improvements, such as a fresh coat of paint, a new tile floor, or even a finished basement. But now you're eyeing your outdated kitchen or thinking about a major new addition: a master bedroom suite, a family room, or a home office. You and your family have simply outgrown the home in its current condition, but want to stay in the same location. You know that a major remodeling project is beyond your do-it-yourself ability, but where do you begin? How do you choose the team of experts that a major upgrade of an older home requires? How do you work with them to achieve the result that you want? How do you know what's feasible? What will it cost? How long will it take? How disruptive will it be?

As anyone who has completed a major home renovation project can report, the experience can be very stressful. Following a few simple guidelines can help you achieve a beautiful addition or home improvement that suits your personal style and meets your family needs without undue stress.

### Plan Ahead

Before you contact an architect or contractor, you can begin by developing a remodeling wish list. Include all of the changes you would like to make. A wish list does not cost you anything, so there is no reason to place any limits on it—there will be plenty of time for that later. Think as broadly as possible and have fun doing it. Make it a family project. Possibilities might surface that had not originally occurred to you, or you may discover that your family's needs and desires are different from what you had assumed them to be.

As you move forward in the renovation process, you and your architect will refine this list into a written remodeling plan, or program. "Programming" is the first step of the architectural design process. A program is the tool that architects use to understand and confirm what the client wants before the actual design work begins. A well-developed wish list gives you and your architect a great starting point for collaborative design, because it helps you to refine your thinking. Be as specific as you can. If you want a large eat-in kitchen with lots of light that opens into a new family room, make that an item on your wish list. Don't worry about *how* to do it; your architect will figure out how to transform your vision

All photographs accompanying this article show projects by GTM Architects.  
Photos courtesy of the architects





into reality. But knowing what you want and being able to communicate it clearly will make you a full partner in the design process. Your wish list should also be as detailed as possible. Include your preferences of color and style, and for products or materials such as flooring, cabinets, plumbing fixtures, and so forth. If you can, make alternate selections of materials, appliances, or fixtures according to price.

You may find it difficult at times to put your ideas into words, or you may not have given much thought to a lot of details. Clippings from residential magazines are a great way to stimulate your thinking and supplement your wish list. Assemble a file of images and note what you like and don't like about each one. Make notes on the photos or in the margins to pass on to the architect with your wish list. Be blunt and brief: "love the wisteria

arbor in this garden, but hate the Mediterranean style of the house;" or "we would like our house to feel welcoming with a big front porch like this one."

As you make your list, think about how you and your family use your home now and how you would like to use it in the future. Ask yourself how your current furnishings will fit into the new space, and what new ones might be needed. Contemplate future needs, such as safety and accessibility features that you might need as your family grows or as you age. Many accessibility features can be incorporated into newly-designed space unnoticeably. Door and faucet levers instead of knobs are easier to operate for children, the physically-impaired, and even the able-bodied with an armful of groceries. Shower curbs can often be eliminated. Consider conveniences such as additional electrical outlets or cable jacks that you





might need for entertainment rooms and home offices. Keep your personal style in mind, and how you might incorporate it into your newly remodeled home.

The next step in making a wish list is to prioritize your wishes. Everyone has dreams that are bigger than their budget, but some items are always more important than others. First, divide your list into two major categories: those items you “must have” versus those items you would “like to have.” Then, rank each item on both lists in order of importance or priority. A new family room and master bathroom might be “must-have” items, but you might be willing to forego the new stone fireplace or the whirlpool tub. Much of the stress of a renovation project can be due to a sense that you have no control over escalating costs. The excitement of a renovation project often causes people—and sometimes, their

architects—to be overly optimistic about project costs. Defining your priorities early helps you decide the “relative worth” of each item before you even know what it costs, and serves as a constant reminder to you and your architect to consider cost throughout the design process. And if, despite your best joint efforts, the project still comes in over budget, making cuts will be much less agonizing, because you will have already given some thought to what you might cut, and in what order.

Keep your wish list and clippings together in a binder, common folder, or perhaps an iPad, depending on your preferences; having all of the information neatly organized in one place allows you to move forward with your project in an orderly manner, and helps to remind you of decisions you have made along the way.



## Be Mindful of Your Neighbors

Remodeling your home will affect not only you and your family, but also your neighbors. Construction will disrupt the daily neighborhood routine, and changes to your home may change the look of the neighborhood, unless you are in an apartment or the renovation is otherwise limited to interior space. The impact of things such as the height of a new second story or the volume of a backyard addition on your immediate neighbors should be considered, and not merely out of consideration for them. If an addition looks out of place among other houses in the area, it may be harder to sell your home in the future. Or, if your home is deemed the “neighborhood gem” in a different price category from neighboring houses, it may be difficult to extract its full value at the time of sale. Although an addition need not necessarily match the look of the existing structure exactly, a successful addition will look natural and will not overwhelm the original house or neighborhood.

Construction noise and disruption may affect your neighbors as much as it affects you and your family, except that they cannot look forward to a wonderful new home after construction is over. A good deal of neighborhood opposition to renovation projects may be due to the “surprise factor” or a sense that people have no control over their environment. Thoughtful consideration and communication can help minimize conflicts. Contact your immediate neighbors individually and give them an overview of the project. If you belong to a neighborhood association or group, keep the association apprised of the status of the project, including estimated start and end dates, the time of day contractors will be working, and any construction activities that may disrupt the daily neighborhood routine. If contractors need to park on the street during the day, or if there will be a dumpster on the street, give your neighbors plenty of notice. Make certain that your contractor obtains any necessary permits.

If your project will require a variance, there is no point in withholding information from the neighbors affected, since they will have a right to the information anyway as part of the variance approval process. When you file for a variance, provide affected neighbors with copies of your variance application and keep them informed of hearing dates.

## Budget Appropriately

Now comes the not-so-fun part—the budget. To get a rough idea of costs before you even speak with an architect, a good starting point is approximately \$250 per square foot. This is a rough, rule-of-thumb figure, as no two remodeling projects are alike—and remember, it’s a starting point. Additions that increase the footprint of a house generally cost relatively more than adding a second or third floor, because of the cost of added foundations. New kitchens and baths cost relatively more than new family rooms.

Keep in mind that there are many areas in which budgets can fluctuate, and that products incorporated into any project can vary widely in cost, including doors and windows, cabinets, plumbing fixtures and fittings, countertops, and appliances. Maintain a continuous dialogue with your architect about alternative design and product selection options. For example, skylights in the attic might convert it into useful living space for a fraction of the cost of reconfiguring the roof with a dormer addition.

In making these decisions, focus on the cost/quality ratio. Remodeling is a long-term investment. A good design and high-quality building materials will be more durable and add greater value. Expensive, luxury materials or appliances may not, since these are often subject to changing trends.

You may also need to budget for changes to your household routines during your remodeling project. For example, in a kitchen remodel, you will need to find an area where you can relocate your refrigerator and microwave to prepare quick meals, and it is likely that you will eat out more often. If the remodeling is large in scale, you may need to factor in the cost of boarding your pets, taking your children to daycare, packing and storing personal belongings, or even renting a temporary home or staying in a hotel while the most disruptive work is being completed.

Despite your best planning efforts and the diligence of your architect and contractor, you can be certain that your project will have unplanned costs. Demolition may uncover unforeseen conditions, or the project may be delayed due to weather or other factors. For example, demolition of a wall may uncover water or insect damage, or building products may not be delivered on time. We recommend to our clients that they include a ten percent contingency in their project budgets to cover any unplanned costs.

## Choosing the Right Team for the Job

Choosing the right architect and contractor are the most important decisions you will make. Interview a number of architects; ask about their specific experience with projects similar to yours, and ask them to review your project binder or digital project files. Ask for references of previous clients, and check them. Choose the team based on talent, design orientation, and technical expertise. You should have the sense that they have a good understanding of your project, your budget, and what you want to accomplish. If possible, tour projects they have completed. Make sure you are comfortable with the architect and team, as you will be working with them for an extended period of time.

AIA | DC offers various online and other resources for residential clients. To begin, visit the chapter’s web page on working with an architect at <http://aiadc.com/tools-resources/clients>. You may also want to peruse photos of recent award-winning residential projects at <http://aiadc.com/competitions/washingtonian-awards>. If you need additional help, call the chapter office at (202) 347-9403.







Often, architects will have a team of contractors with whom they prefer working. As you interview architects, ask if they have contractors they would recommend, or whether you will be solely responsible for finding the contractor. Contact prospective contractors, and begin checking references early; there is no need to wait until the designs are complete. Be certain to verify the licenses of the contractors with the state or local licensing board.

The design process for any project goes through a number of formal phases: programming, schematic design, design development, and construction documents. Once you've entered into an agreement with your architect, ask for a detailed explanation of each of these phases, and what decisions you will be expected to make at each phase. Never hesitate to ask questions! Clients are not expected to know everything about design and construction, and most architects are very happy to help educate you. The

design process often requires time and several meetings to make sure your needs are met.

Communicate with all of the involved parties regularly; after all, this is your home. Obtain contact information for your designated project managers from the architect and the contractor, and develop a schedule to receive regular updates on the project. Regular communication reduces the likelihood of cost overruns or schedule changes, and provides a forum for you to voice concerns or affirm that the project is moving in the right direction.

Remodeling takes time and patience, but the more you plan ahead and take an active role, the more likely you will be pleased with the process and the results.

*This is an updated version of an article previously published in ARCHITECTUREDC in 2006.* 🏡





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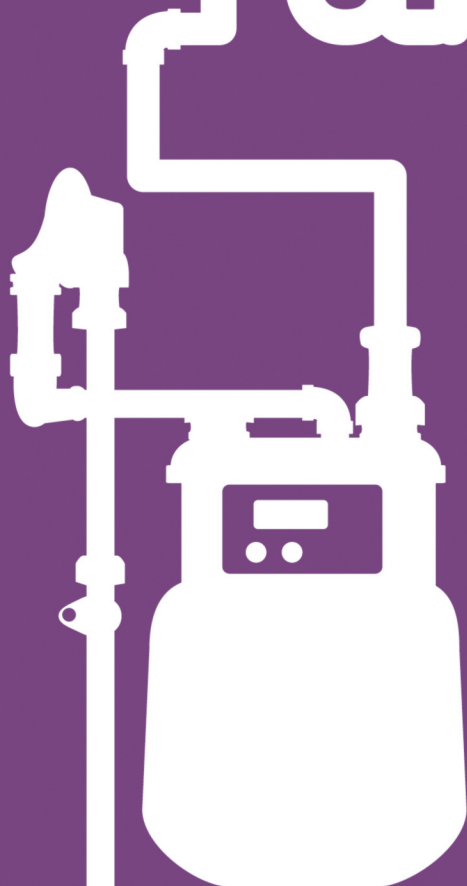
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